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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO FAA NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS WASH DC
FOR LARRY KEPHART
DAKAR FOR ED JONES

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EINV](#) [EAIR](#) [GH](#) [ECON](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA CIVAIR UPDATE - POSITIVE CHANGES AND REAL
RESULTS

REF: ACCRA 407

1. (U) Summary: Ghana's civil aviation sector has entered a period of rebuilding after a year which saw the demise of Ghana Airways, the crash of Ghana-based MK Airlines' 747 in Nova Scotia, and the subsequent downgrade of the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), which barred all Ghanaian carriers from flying to the US (reftel). Ghana International Airways, a new company with American management, has become the national carrier and begun operations despite the strenuous objections of former Ghana Airways employees. The GoG and GCAA have shown good faith by allowing North American Airways to take advantage of the US-Ghana Open Skies agreement and provide direct service between Accra and New York. GCAA appears to be on track to regain Category 1 status by May of 2006. End Summary.

Ghana International Airlines

2. (U) Ghana's new national carrier, Ghana International Airlines (GIA), made its maiden flight from Accra to London on October 29. GIA plans to service the route daily with a 757 wet-leased from US-based Ryan Air.

3. (SBU) GIA's Vice-President for Operation, Amcit Albert Vitale, told Econoff October 22 that the company had received several threats from former employees of the now-defunct Ghana Airways. GIA's American managers and the GoG are taking these threats seriously after a former Ghana Airways employee attempted to infiltrate a group of GIA flight attendants scheduled to attend a training session October 19 in London. Vitale told EconOff that he received word from a current GIA employee that the former Ghana Airways employee intended to cause 'mischief' on either the flight to London or in the training session. The former employee was stopped in Kotoka Airport by National Security agents and a representative of the British High Commission to Ghana, who revoked his UK visa. GIA has added several layers of security to prevent incidents. Vitale reported that GoG cooperation on this issue was "excellent."

4. (SBU) GIA plans to add a second wet leased aircraft --also from Ryan Air-- before the end of the year to provide service to Dusseldorf and Johannesburg. Vitale plans to have two 767s -- operated by GIA crews -- in Accra in December and in operation by March, 2006. These 767s will service the North American routes GIA inherited from Ghana Airways. According to Vitale, Ethiopian Airlines, which had agreed to provide service to North America for GIA under a code-share agreement, has not come forward with the technical and financial assistance it originally agreed to provide to GIA.

5. (U) The arrival of these 767s is an important step in the licensing of GIA, which is central to GCAA's bid to regain Category I status. FAA cited licensing of an airline by GCAA under Ghana's new Civil Aviation Act --passed in December 2004-- as one of the prerequisites for the reinstatement of Category I status. GIA has already applied for its license and submitted safety manuals to GCAA. Vitale told EconOff he hopes to get GIA licensed by the end of March 2006.

North American Airlines

6. (SBU) North American continues to provide the only direct service between Accra and North America with a weekly flight to New York. According to Country Director Obed Owusu-Kissi, at least one additional flight will be added in April of 2006. North American is also seriously considering offering service between New York and Lagos and Baltimore and Banjul within the next year.

Ghana Civil Aviation Authority and FAA's visit

7. (U) FAA Regional Representative Ed Jones visited Ghana October to assess GCAA's progress towards recovering Category I status, which will allow Ghanaian flagged carriers to fly

to the US. Jones reported that GCAA had made significant progress on its training agenda created in the wake of FAA's February 2005 assessment and subsequent downgrade. GCAA has managed to address most of the major training deficiencies outlined in FAA's report.

18. (SBU) According to Jones, training for GCAA's flight operations inspectors -- which requires inspectors to demonstrate proficiency in the systems and operation of the specific aircraft types in use by domestic carriers -- is lagging, mainly due to the upcoming retirement of both of GCAA's operations inspectors. GCAA told Jones that they had hired four new inspectors and hoped to have them trained and certified as soon as possible. GIA's Albert Vitale (see para 3) expressed GIA's willingness to allow GCAA inspectors access to the 767s for training purposes. GCAA has also formally requested technical assistance from FAA to assist in the final licensing of GIA. (NOTE: GCAA's Acting Director General Nii Badoo told EconOff that the current inspectors were not retiring so much as they were being retired. End Note.)

COMMENT

19. (SBU) It appears that GCAA and GIA are working together to address FAA's concerns and move the licensing process forward as quickly as possible. Fortunately, both parties seem to have a similar understanding of what constitutes the possible. GCAA's has benefited greatly from President Kufuor's decision to have it report directly to his office rather than the Ministry of Roads and Transport. EconOff can attest to a real change in GCAA's atmosphere and employee morale as compared to the months immediately after last year's Ghana Airways debacle. GCAA's managers answer questions directly, make decisions, and understand exactly what has been done and what is needed to remake GCAA into a functioning and authoritative civil oversight body. End Comment.
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